

# GRAINGER



# MARKET



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At almost 200 years old, the Grainger Market is a very special place in central Newcastle. Rich in history and heritage, it's widely loved by anyone who has ever been there.

Owned and operated by Newcastle City Council, Grainger Market is a historic covered market which continues to play a pivotal role in retail and dining culture.

Constructed as part of the city's redevelopment by architect Richard Grainger in the 1830s, Grainger Market first opened in 1835 and is one of the few market halls in the UK that remain in use for its original purpose. It is a Grade I Listed Market which retains the same architecture, details and nuances created by the original architect, John Dobson.

Home to local traders and small businesses from Newcastle and the North East region, Grainger Market has been home to cobblers, florists, and jewellers, to haberdasheries, bakeries, high-quality butchers, fishmongers and greengrocers.

However, over the years, it had started to feel a little tired. The Grainger Market was facing an uncertain future following years of decline, the negative impact of the pandemic, the demise of the high street and the rising cost of living that has gripped the region. The market had a loyal community of customers and traders, but needed to evolve to stay relevant and commercially viable. There was a need to demonstrate the community and the uniqueness of the space to a wider audience.

The market needed a clear identity: to redefine how the space would be presented and what it would mean for the traders, customers and the wider city.

The new brand positioning and identity had to be authentic to the history and community of the market, while appealing to new traders, customers and creating a wider buzz in the city and region. This couldn't be another Time Out Market. The identity needed to work for all: the generations of long-standing traders and the new ones, the hipster foodies, the sustainable shoppers and the canny customers looking for a deal.

At the heart of our strategy was a simple guiding idea 'Wander and wonder in every alley and arcade' and a strong brand character, the 'working class Geordie hero'. A play on words, the guiding idea evokes a 'wander' through the market's maze-like alleys and the 'wonder' of discovering the extraordinary every day. It's also a return to the market's turn-of-the-century 'age of wonder' glory days. This was to drive excitement, ramp up the 'maze-like adventure' visitors can enjoy while meandering the historic alleyways. Not gentrified, not generic; strongly rooted in Newcastle and the North East.

The design was born from the architecture of the market – a palette inspired by the colours found in the market and the city's architecture and a bespoke font based on the floor plan of the market.

The success of our design work was measured by:

- Driving awareness through social media reach—well surpassing our target of a 20% increase.
- Driving engagement through social media—smashing our target of a 10% increase.
- Securing new traders (11 new traders welcomed into the market – against a target of 4).
- Annual footfall in the market increased from 275,223 in 2022 to 349,584 in 2024.

Our design strategy created a community, both strengthening the existing sense of belonging that the traders and loyal customers felt towards the market, as well as generating excitement and a desire to explore among a new audience.

# MARKET CONTEXT AND PROJECT BRIEF

The Grainger Market is the original retail heart of Newcastle and has served the public for almost 200 years. This Grade I-listed covered market is a community of traders, regular customers and visitors. You can buy anything from bargain groceries and household goods to a delicious lunch from the many diverse food vendors.

The Grainger Market plays an important role in the regional economy. The market is a big contributor to the North East, with low-cost units providing entry points for small, independent traders to develop and grow their businesses that may have first started as a stall at the nearby Quayside weekend market. This in turn supports local supply chains, from Northumbrian farmers, fishmongers from North Shields and Tyne-based bakers.

## Grainger Market in 2022

The Grainger Market had begun to struggle in recent years. The rise of online shopping began to affect visitor numbers—in 2022 the total footfall for the year was 275,223, compared with 473,398 in 2019. This is not an issue which is unique to the Grainger Market—The National Association of British Markets (NABMA) most recent study revealed that generally street markets and outdoor covered markets have seen the greatest decline in footfall in recent years.

Many successful markets are based in affluent urban areas with high numbers of tourists. They provide high-end dining and lifestyle retail—think of Covent Garden (London), Mackie Mayor (Manchester) and the Time Out Markets (Lisbon, New York, Boston, Chicago, Montreal, Dubai, and Cape Town). Twenty-four per cent of Grainger Market users live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Another challenge was attracting and retaining traders to set up in the market. Research by the British Retail Consortium and Local Data Company found that 19.7% of shops in the North East were empty in the third quarter of 2021—the highest rate in Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland)—against an 18.6% vacancy rate in Q3 2020. The Grainger Market followed this trend—citing that out of 116 available units, there were 18 either empty or soon to be vacated in 2021.

The historic building also needed attention. Newcastle City Council developed ambitious plans to transform the indoor retail space with new wayfinding, upgraded facilities and modernisation of the space (Wi-Fi, new seating and entrance doors). This was not about creating a gentrified version of the market—this would price out customers and traders and wouldn't be the right fit for the region. This was about retaining the charm and history of the space, while protecting its future commercially. However, with the work causing disruption and change for the traders and customers; they needed reassurance that the market was still the right place for them.

Image showing traders at the market.



# THE BRIEF

The Council needed a partner to develop a new brand positioning, visual identity and communications to help the market through this transition phase. The positioning and identity for the market would be key to this project, to create a sense of community in the physical space and online. A sense of togetherness which would encourage new customers, traders and create a buzz around an important retail space in the city.

Our work for the Grainger Market was carried out by our internal team and in collaboration with an architecture practice that produced the physical installation of our design.

Design fees amounted to £57,225 with work beginning on 31st March 2023, this included all insights, strategy and initial design work.

## Our objectives

### Awareness:

#### Drive general public awareness

Increase awareness of Grainger Market by achieving an increase of 20% reach through social media marketing channels from April 2023 to June 2025.

### Engagement:

#### Increase positive sentiment & engagement

Achieve a 10% increase in social media engagement from April 2023 to June 2025.

### Action:

#### Increase footfall & attract new traders

Boost average weekly footfall by 20% from annual totals for 2022 to annual totals for 2024, measured via on-site sensors or manual counts.

Secure 4 new trader sign-ups (or contracts) for the market/event from April 2023 to June 2025 through targeted outreach and promotional efforts.

## Design Solution

The physical market space and its traders were central to the brand and visual identity, which needed to reflect the community of Grainger Market to engage the current audience, as well as inspire and intrigue wider audiences. We needed to bring to life what makes Grainger unique, it's not a faceless corporate retailer. There's a beautiful historic space, full of characters and new experiences.

At the heart of our brand strategy was a simple guiding idea 'Wander and wonder in every alley and arcade' and a strong brand character, the 'working class Geordie hero'. A play on words, the guiding idea evokes a 'wander' through the market's maze-like alleys and the 'wonder' of discovering the extraordinary every day. It's also a return to the market's turn of the century 'age of wonder' glory days. This is illustrated in the image, showing the bespoke typeface we created for Grainger, winding around the floorplan of the market. This was to drive excitement, ramp up the 'maze-like adventure' visitors can enjoy while meandering the historic alleyways. Not gentrified, not generic; strongly rooted in Newcastle and the community of the market—the strategy was informed by insights from traders and customers.

The design takes inspiration from the characteristics of the architecture. Within the arches, columns, lattices, and walls, patterns began emerging and inspired bold typography. We used the floorplan of the Market as a grid upon which to draw a unique headline typeface. This gave the letterforms distinctive characteristics which captured the essence of the brand character as well as reflecting the style of the historical typographic signage that has adorned the Market over the years.

Social media assets have been kept simple: two colours, a headline typeface and a strong monogram symbol - easily recognisable and uncomplicated. The typographic style brings the tone of voice and creative copywriting to life, and the addition of motion helps engage social media users against the endless scroll.

We created a Trader Toolkit to help them be part of the online community. This was a series of design assets that they could use on their channel or to create Grainger Market merchandise. This included pre-designed social media posts, offline materials including pre-designed poster templates, as well as guidance on how to use the brand to create merchandise. This was key to working towards a consistent activation of the brand to create a unified community online and offline.

The visual identity has been fully integrated with the architectural designs. The typeface will be embedded into the entrance tunnel floors to act as permanent wayfinding, the symbol will appear at strategic wayfinding points such as entrances, tunnel flooring and other signage. Paintwork throughout the Market (excluding trader storefronts and branding) will use the brand palette. All this will ensure a seamless customer journey from digital right through to the bricks-and-mortar experience.

We created a colour palette inspired by the city, taking cues from iconic landmarks such as the Tyne Bridge and Grey Street. The deep, primary green represents movement across the Tyne Bridge to the Grainger Market, Photography and videography styles mirror the brand character and guiding idea; a colour palette lending to a warm, natural and authentic visual style akin to the people who live and breathe the Grainger Market.

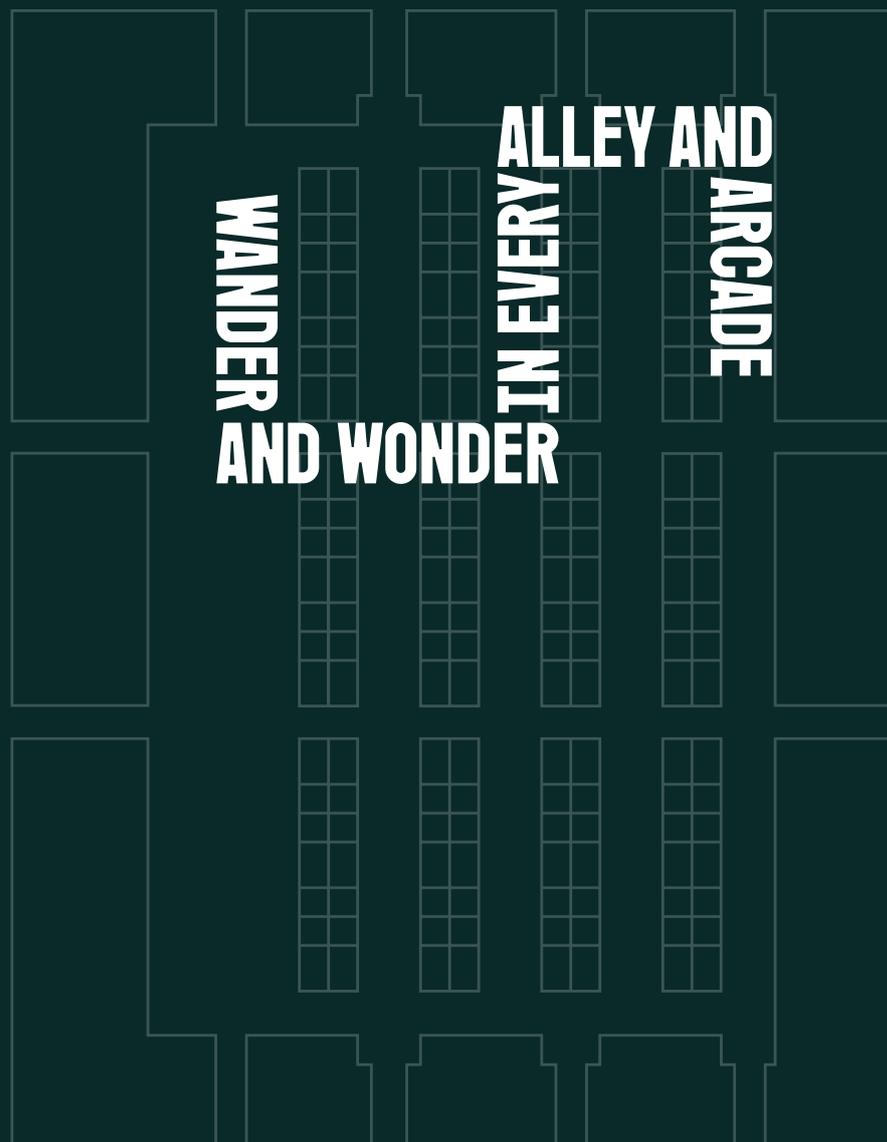


Image of the outline of the floor plan with the tagline 'Wander and Wonder in every alley and arcade' weaving through the aisles.

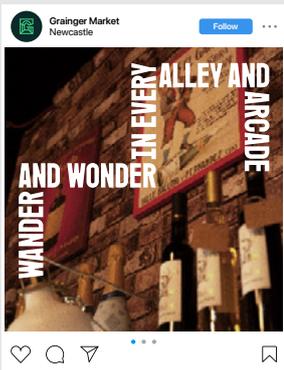


**BREAKFAST  
LUNCH  
REPAIRS  
COFFEE  
VINTAGE  
BUTCHERS  
MAKERS**



**SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS**

We've also created some pre-designed, Grainger Market branded, assets for you to use on your social media channels. These will help align your business to a brand which is already going from strength to strength. These assets range from graphics to frame your social media image posts through to animated messages that will create impact and help increase engagement on your channels. If you'd like to use these assets, they can be accessed on the trader engagement platform: [www.graingermarket.co.uk](http://www.graingermarket.co.uk) using your own log-in & password. This page and the next page just shows a brief overview of the complete set of assets, there is a separate document which has a full list of the assets available to use.



## RESULTS AND OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Showcasing the market's story and character in a digital and social environment has led to real commercial value in terms of increased visitor numbers and spending. The design has been the golden thread between the physical space and online communities, creating a consistent feeling of belonging.

The design has played a key role in creating a distinctive identity for the market above and beyond a physical retail space, attracting attention from the public, journalists and influencers. It's created a sense of belonging which audiences and influencers have wanted to be part of. Our communications activity has achieved 46 pieces in both regional and national titles. To raise the profile of upgrades and increase footfall in the Grainger Market, we developed a social media strategy which included working with influencers. For example, to showcase the cuisine of a new Sri Lankan trader, we approached the official TikTok ambassador for Newcastle, resulting in a viral video that generated over 1.3 million views and 30,000 engagements on Instagram alone, leading to high footfall to the new trader and directly driving sales over the launch weekend.

The buzz around the community of the market:

- Attracted Newcastle United Football Club to produce content with professional Premier League and England international footballer Dan Burn.
- Creative Central to host indie band Maximo Park for an impromptu acoustic show.
- The Late Shows (a after-hours culture crawl across the city organised by North East Museums) transformed the Market into a living, breathing art gallery for The Late Shows.

A customer enjoying food in the Market.



Awareness: Drive general public awareness  
Objective: Increase social media reach by 20% per year

## FACEBOOK REACH 176% INCREASE

April 23 — 101,779  
June 25 — 1,636,719

## INSTAGRAM REACH 105% INCREASE

April 23 — 44,240  
June 25 — 142,744



Engagement: Increase positive sentiment and engagement  
Objective: Increase social engagement by 10% per year

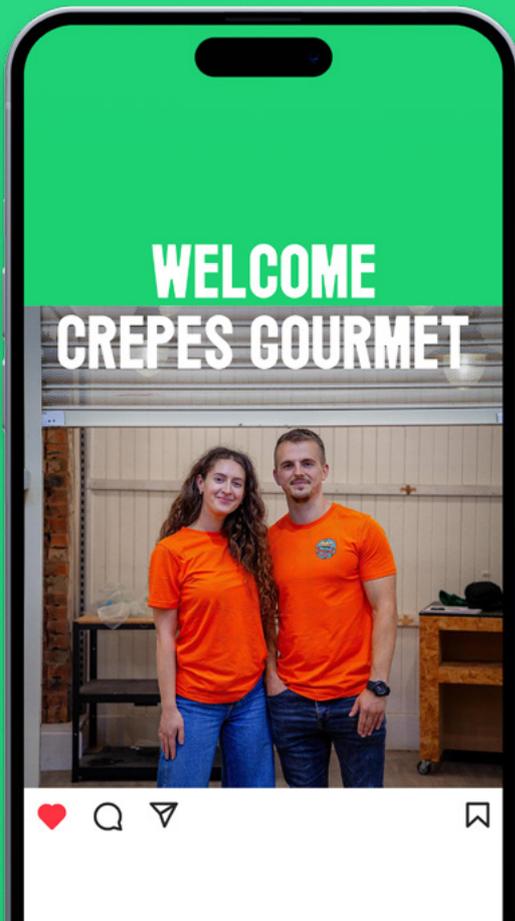
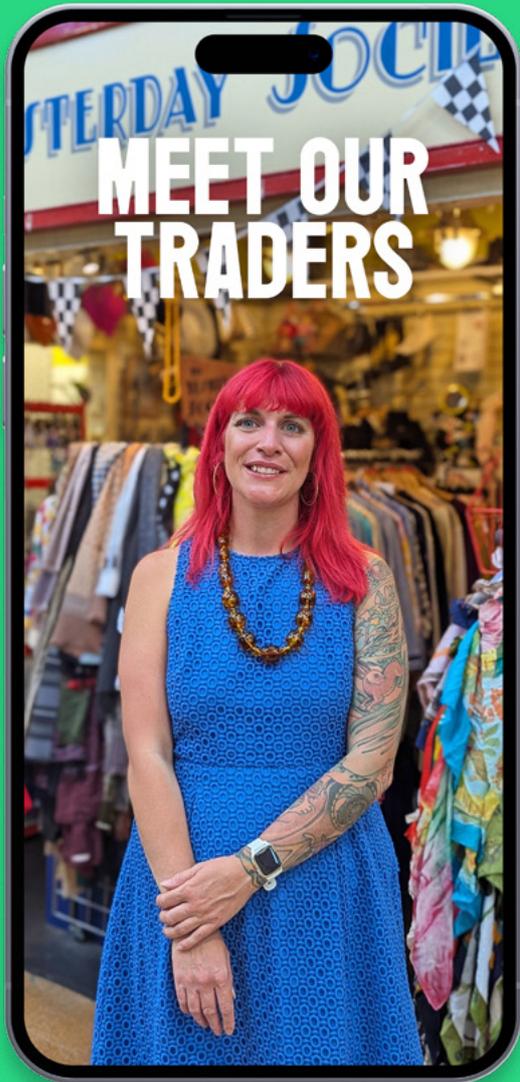
## FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT 82% INCREASE

April 23 — 37,249  
June 25 — 89,811

## INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT 117% INCREASE

April 23 — 2,784  
June 25 — 10,633





We also collected anecdotal evidence from the traders and the market inspector to demonstrate the benefit they've seen to their businesses:

“The social media team has played a huge role in boosting footfall and fostering a sense of community. Through engaging content, they've highlighted local traders, special events and offerings, bringing both tourists and locals to the Market. The work has not only increased awareness but also established the Market's reputation as a hub of culture and a destination to visit.”

Marc, manager at Analog

“I just wanted to say how impressed I have been with the Grainger Market social media since taking over. The photos and videos are fabulous. They catch the essence of the market and the characters. I love reading the poetic descriptions in each post and the great variation. We receive positive feedback about the posts and people visit the Market because they have seen them online.”

Rob, Market Inspector

“I am very grateful to the Grainger Market team. I've seen much more coverage of Grainger Market in the past two years than ever before. I'm very pleased that they were able to get more influencers to promote the Grainger Market as a whole, because as a small business, sometimes we struggle to get the attention of big influencers. The new-look designs and social media have also helped to attract more younger generation customers.”

Tian, owner of Tian's Gifts

# EVALUATING OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Businesses that signed up to become a Grainger Market trader did not receive any discounts, special deals or reduced rates as an incentive. The Grainger Market has fixed opening times throughout the year, only staying open on rare occasions to welcome initiatives such as The Late Shows in May and opening on Sunday in December for the run-up to Christmas.

We were not allocated a budget to run advertising campaigns to target prospective traders to open premises or encourage footfall into the Market.

The building work and improvement to the space have increased interest and coverage of the market, which could have been a factor in increasing awareness, engagement and action. However, the maintenance of a building in isolation does not create a sense of community and buzz. Because the design was so clearly born from the space, it gave a greater sense of understanding and appreciation for the physical building, which helped to achieve our objectives. It also helped to maintain the community in the face of the disruption of the building work.

The design work has formed part of the PR, influencer and social media activity and it's difficult to analyse them completely separately. Following the highly successful marketing of Grainger Market's food and drink offer, we welcomed household names such as Big Zuu from ITV, Adam Richman, most famously from Man v Food and hosted Maximo Park for the launch of their new album. The design identity and ongoing design work has been a part of this wider marketing activity. However, we would argue that the unique identity and positioning of the market has been key to driving engagement through marketing. The design has created a sense of community and belonging—a club that people want to be part of. The design connected the physical space of the market with a larger online community, which was central to the story telling which has generated such reach and engagement.

The North East is currently receiving investment from both central government and private investors—this has resulted in transformative projects such as Newcastle United Football Club PIF takeover and transportation improvements to Newcastle Airport (a new study found that the airport generates £1bn annually for the North East economy and supports over 17,000 jobs) has accelerated growth. It is plausible that increased interest in the football club, now of international interest, plus an increase in visitors to the region via improved transport links, has influenced the awareness of and engagement with the market. However, there are plenty of spaces competing for attention in the region, such as other retail spaces (in Newcastle, Eldon Square and Metro Centre) and other dining options (recently opened venues such as national brands Rudys & Mowgli as well as STACK—a shipping container village). The design created for Grainger Market has created a unique, independent identity and a community which people want to be part of.

While we built brand affinity by connecting local cultures and people while highlighting the textures and nuances of the Grainger Market through our social media strategy, a report by Accenture suggests that 56% of UK people are rethinking how they spend their free time and how they're locating joy and balance among real-world activities and genuine human connections. This could have supported an increased interest in the market. However, many markets and physical retail environments have failed to capitalise on this trend by not having a unique and engaging identity. The design work has helped to capitalise on the trend by bringing to life the heritage and characters of the space online.

## CREDITS

### Client:

Newcastle City Council

Rachel Bishop

Michelle Percy

Jane Rose

John Seager

Paul Stewart

### Agency:

Gardiner Richardson

Anneliese Clark

Gavin Downey

Matt Forster

Clare Hampton

Darren Richardson

Jodi Stephenson

Matthew Thomas

Charlie Watson